

obviously be of immense value in evaluating, planning, and administering the state tuberculosis control program. However, whether or not a state record system of the *detailed* type recommended would be practicable in so many states is a question which can be settled only after longer experience with it in more states.

The manual emphasizes that the installation of a state record system is a desirable prerequisite to the establishment of local registers in most states. But it recognizes that "the development of a State Central Record System before the existence of local registers leads to many difficulties, the foremost of which is that, in the beginning, the state system must contain more elaborate information than would be necessary if local registers were in operation. Once local registers are developed, the state can make the transition from complexity to simplicity with little effort."

The purposes and methods of use of a state record system are discussed fully. But insufficient attention is given to the methods of using a local case register for its primary purpose of assisting the local health department in the public health supervision and management of individual cases. There is a lack of sufficient emphasis on the fundamental point that the routine clerical maintenance of a register must be supplemented by active professional interest, interpretation, and use by the health officer, the tuberculosis administrator, and the public health nurse.

The clerical procedures recommended are admirably presented in orderly detail. The format is excellent and unique. The inclusion of specimen report forms and statistical tabulation forms adds greatly to the technical value and usefulness of the manual.

EDWARD X. MIKOL

The Ranks of Death: A Medical History of the Conquest of America

—By Colonel P. M. Ashburn. *New York: Coward-McCann, 1947. 298 pp. Price, \$5.00.*

The late Colonel P. M. Ashburn, at one time librarian of the Surgeon General's Library, has here described and interpreted the medical history of early American settlement. His son, Frank D. Ashburn, has added introductory observations. The book does not provide a historical narrative of the usual sort, since it is arranged primarily in terms of diseases rather than in time sequence. This makes it seem disjointed to the historian, but will appeal to medical men interested in the historic role of particular forms of illness. Spanish-American and English sources are carefully assembled and analyzed.

The following conclusions are presented: (1) that the Indians suffered most from the exchange of European, African, and American diseases; (2) that resulting Indian mortality greatly facilitated the conquest; but that (3) whites and Negroes later suffered much from infections they themselves had introduced. These theses are not novel, but are presented in a convincing manner. The author also discusses disease origins, and adds the sound observation that much illness subsequently ascribed to infections was really starvation or scurvy.

One may question conclusions at a few points; e.g., that it was primarily Negroes who conveyed malaria—which hardly accounts for its wide distribution in colonial New England. The reviewer agrees with the author that historians have usually overlooked the great significance of the disease factor in the conquest. Since Colonel Jones wrote a decade ago, however, a number of careful studies have appeared, such as those of Childs and Ackerknecht on malaria. The bibliography appended is helpful, but does not seem to come down beyond about 1936.

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